

***CIVVIH
NARNI, ITALIA
JUNE 2009***

***ANNUAL MEETING
REPORT OF THE PRESIDENT***

Our last Annual Meeting was held in Quebec in 2008. CIVVIH has been able to maintain an annual meeting for its Members as well as organize other meetings in between.

Our 2008 Meeting, held during the GA, resulted as usual with an increased interest in our ISC. This has meant an influx of new Members from all over the year. Unfortunately we also lose contact with some Members who do not respond to their emails any more.

Expert Members

After the amendments to the Statute we have to submit these new applicants to a control process of their cvs. I myself had insisted that it is not correct for just the President to decide on who should or should not be an Expert Member. The task, according to our Statute, is now in the hands of the Vice Presidents.

I appreciate very much that in the past weeks they have had to deal with a large number of cvs for their consideration. However we need to clarify more the criteria under which we say yes or no. We have had to say a temporary 'no' to six persons and of course they are not very pleased. Three of them have submitted new information and two have now been approved.

It is even worse when the person in question has been designated by the National Committee as the Voting Expert in representation of that NC. This creates a complication that we need to discuss further.

Since I became President I have insisted that CIVVIH should be open to as many persons as possible. We were the first ISC to open up our doors to all who were interested in the themes we dealt with. I still maintain

that our main task is to act as a network of professionals, making sure that more and more professionals in our field come to CIVVIH and ICOMOS. We have to be very careful therefore in having the right balance between an open door policy and making sure that all our Members deserve to be so. Of course today we also have Associate Members but it is not all that easy to draw a line between one and the other, even so because of course criteria can not easily apply to all the countries. Even at academic levels there are big differences.

World Heritage

Cities are facing very difficult challenges. We all know about the endless discussion on new architecture and interventions in historic towns and villages, especially those already on the World Heritage List. CIVVIH does not have the resources to be able to give an opinion on all these issues and yet we should.

I have made it a point to give out all points of views, allowing our Members to decide for themselves what is right or wrong, but even this can lead to the creation of problems, even between our own Members.

Paris has asked me to nominate persons for the evaluation and desk reports of new nominated sites. This year they have insisted even more that this should be handled in complete confidence and so had to act as per policy of our Head Office.

Yet I feel that this is not enough in terms of 'consultations' with ISCs. Paris needs to find a more transparent system of consultation on the new nominated sites but also on the State of Conservation reports.

Our long standing Members, Nils Ahlberg, has over the past months been one of the part time consultants, giving advice to the World Heritage section in Paris.

Regional Sub Committees

Unfortunately I have over the past year heard nothing from the Ibero-American Sub Committee. In view of the difficulty for Members from Latin America to attend our Meetings, this Committee is to my mind very, very important and we need to revive it.

The Mediterranean Sub Committee has continued to work in an excellent way under the leadership of Sofia Avgerinou and they have not only managed to organize an Annual Meeting but also find the necessary funding for it. These thematic meetings have been extremely successful and one sincerely hopes that we will be able to maintain the same level of success in future meetings.

Web site

The one main major problem continues to be the non functioning web site that we have. We need to find a solution for this and it is my great ambition to resolve this matter within the next weeks.

My appeal goes out to those that can assist in this matter. This is extremely importance and I hope that the new Bureau will resolve this issue as soon as possible.

Information

As in past years I have continued to give out information of interest to our Members. I appreciate that not all the information is of interest to everyone but generally I get very good feedback on some of the information given.

Attendance at meetings

The CIVVIH President is invited to attend quite a number of meetings. I have always tried my best to attend all the important meetings. The problem is of course that there is less and less funding for such meetings. Over the past year I have had to find my own financing for practically all the meetings I attended.

Collaboration with other organizations

The Bureau needs to find a system on allocating responsibilities so that we can establish more formal collaboration with an ever increasing number of organizations that are established. We must find a way to increase our collaboration with ISOCARP and others: as usual there is

a problem with funding and also the fact that on many occasions the dates of major conferences clash.

Washington Charter

I wish first of all to recognize the great work of Elvira Petroncelli and Alvaro Gomez Ferrer, and to Sofia Avgerinou and her team in organizing the Athens meeting.

I think that after many months of discussion we have come to an important level of progress. Now we need to make the final step on deciding the format of our work and what we shall present to ICOMOS.

It is my hope that our 2010 Annual Meeting, which hopefully will be held much earlier in the year, will discuss this matter only. Of course this question has to be decided upon by the Committee meeting which unfortunately does not have much time to discuss the theme.

Statute and the Narni meeting

This has been the first year when we have tried to work within our amended Statute. In particular as I said earlier it has not been easy to decide on level of membership as well as to react with regards to persons who have been Members with us for many years. This task is in the hands of the Vice Presidents. The Bureau must come up with very transparent criteria on how the decisions are done. It is a very delicate matter that needs particular attention, especially in view of who the National Committees propose.

On one part it is also so encouraging to see the interest in CIVVIH and to see in particular interest from countries that were very under represented in the past. This however poses more challenges, especially because of the problem of languages. I really wish we could find a way and the resources to be able to have at least all our administrative correspondence in both French and Spanish.

I have over the past four months had to deal with an enormous amount of emails related to the Narni meeting. We have had a healthy but lengthy discussion on themes for the meeting. We have frustrated the local organizers with the continuous changes that we requested. I have

no doubt that Paolo Motta must be sorry for having proposed that we meet here !

I personally have no problem with discussion as long as once a decision has been taken the discussion is closed. There are those however who continue to discuss and open up new issues.

I recognize the work of the City. It is not easy for a small or medium city to organize such meetings. I know very well the difficulties involved.

I have tried to be open and patient with everyone but even my diplomatic patience has a limit at times.

I am particular grateful to the Scientific Committee who discussed the abstracts presented. We got requests right up to the last minute. Ian Hocking, Samir Abdulac, and Nur Akin, together did a very difficult job in reviewing these abstracts. Some are disappointed.

Once more many thanks to the Mayor and the City, to Paolo Motta in particular and to you all for being patient if your name did not appear and so on. Michael Firestone was in charge of drawing up Members lists and helps in many other ways.

Conclusion

I have always believed very strongly in putting in a team effort. I look upon the Presidency of CIVVIH as a great responsibility. I have always given CIVVIH as much of my time as I can. I wish I could count the hundreds of emails I have to respond to, from our Members but also from Paris, other organizations and mainly students. I have always tried to be fair with everyone and let everyone give their say.

It would be wonderful if we could have an Annual Meeting of one week but is not possible for many of us. I am grateful for those who came here from afar and made this effort.

Narni is a small historic town. Thanks to Paolo Motta they have shown interest in our organization and went out of their way to assist us. I hope that those of you who can will see more of the beautiful region of Umbria. I will unfortunately not be with you in Assisi as it was

impossible for me to cancel a prior commitment I had with my Ministry from a long time ago, before the change of our programme was made. In a way this takes us back to the old days when in Hungary we always used to have a site visit.

I apologise to those that did not receive an immediate answer from me or others. I wish so much that the responsibilities are shared with the other Officers much more. The President has too much on his shoulders and as I have already stated I am grateful to the two Committees, that is the Scientific Committees and the new Members Committee, for their work.

Historic towns and villages are the very essence of mankind. We have an enormous responsibility. I am convinced that through our work we contribute to the scientific work on the themes that are so close to us. My appeal is to everyone to work together so that we do more, much more than we already do.

Ray Bondin